

1. FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION OVERALL STATE SELF-ASSESSMENT

The six sections highlighted in the questionnaire represent the core elements of building a fully coordinated transportation system. This questionnaire was designed to help you see the big picture of your overall progress. Take a moment to review the evaluations you made at the end of each section and make a note of them on this page. By doing so, you will create an at-a-glance summary of your individual assessment that identifies areas where your system is working well and areas that can be improved.

Section 1: Making Things Happen by Leadership and Partnership

- Done Well

Section 2: Taking Stock of State Needs and Moving Forward

- Needs Significant Action

Section 3: Putting Customers First

- Needs Significant Action

Section 4: Adapting Funding For Greater Mobility

- Needs Significant Action

Section 5: Technology Moves Coordination to the Next Level

- Needs Significant Action

Section 6: Moving People Efficiently

- Needs Action

Minnesota Coordination Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

Project Background

The Minnesota Coordination Action Plan, a state initiative undertaken by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, establishes a planning framework to develop a statewide action plan for improving transportation coordination. Its purpose is to educate public transit and human services transportation stakeholders about the benefits of transportation coordination, and to identify best practices already in existence that can be replicated at the local level.

Concurrent with MnDOT's effort, the U.S. Department of Transportation launched the *United We Ride* program. In February 2004, President Bush issued an Executive Order #13330 on human services transportation. The Executive Order recognized the "fundamental importance of human service transportation and the continuing need to enhance coordination." It directed several Federal departments and agencies (the Departments of Labor, Education, Veteran's Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban

Development, the Interior, the Attorney General, and the Commission of Social Security) to work together to ensure that transportation services are seamless, comprehensive and accessible. The Executive Order challenged the newly formed Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) to provide the most appropriate, cost effective services within existing resources. The CCAM responded with five recommendations designed to strengthen existing transportation services and to help providers become more responsive to consumers. The five recommendations are:

Comment:

1. Human service transportation programs should participate in a community transportation planning process.
2. Vehicles used in human service transportation should be shared with other federally-funded programs.
3. Human service and other transportation agencies should develop standard cost allocation principles for transportation services.
4. Human service transportation agencies should maintain data that will allow for the cross agency analysis of the agencies' effectiveness, efficiency, and progress toward improved coordination.
5. Selected agencies should propose/participate in demonstration programs, as appropriate, to show how a single transportation system financed through a consolidated federally funded stream (assuming statutory authority is obtained) can better meet the mobility needs of transportation-disadvantaged populations.

The federal direction provided on transportation coordination as well as input from the Minnesota Coordination Project Advisory Committee provided the basis for the statewide action plan presented in this chapter. The action plan presents an institutional framework for state, regional and local coordination strategies for Greater Minnesota. A similar action plan takes into consideration the urban environment of the Metro area and is presented in a later chapter.

Statewide Institutional Framework

Every community has specific coordination solutions that address local political and operational realities of its environment. Minnesota has a long history of establishing comprehensive transportation policy that responds to the specific needs of local communities and their residents. MnDOT was an early leader in promoting coordination and continues to lead the way with this action plan. The framework presented herein represents a model approach that furthers the ideals put forth in the *United We Ride* initiative. The framework reflects the existing environments and transportation philosophies unique to Minnesota, and will no doubt in time, come to be known as the "Minnesota Model."

As described in the previous chapter, Minnesota is one of the few states that have public transit services in nearly all counties (eighty of eighty-seven counties, seven of which are part of the Metropolitan Twin Cities). Some systems operate traditional fixed and deviated route services and others provide demand responsive services. Some transit

systems operate within a single county; while others provide multi-county service. There are several transit systems that operate solely within municipal boundaries. MnDOT has also recognized that traditional public transit services cannot efficiently or effectively address all of the mobility needs that exist within a community.

To address the mobility needs of a diverse population, a "family of services" needs to be provided. The Greater Minnesota population base includes active seniors, frail elderly, individuals who are disabled, members of the workforce, and students who have differing travel requirements. Non-traditional services have already emerged at several locations throughout the state as transit systems have supplemented their traditional fixed route services and/or demand response services with volunteer networks and contracts with social service agencies. MnDOT has established that public transit systems should be the focal point for transportation services within their respective counties. As such, MnDOT has encouraged public transit systems to provide transportation services to human service agencies and others within their respective counties.

In these cases, the emergence of the family of services has been launched by necessity in response to specific needs that have become apparent over time. In other areas, services are disjointed, with private non-profit, private-for-profit, and public transit systems operating independently from one another. Sometimes they operate in direct competition with one another leaving gaps in service, duplication, and inefficiencies.

The Framework builds on the concept of a comprehensive family of services that meets the mobility needs of the community by taking advantage of the strengths of existing service providers. The Framework promotes forming or expanding services to fill gaps, and establishes a single contact where all transportation needs can be met. The Framework establishes that public transit systems throughout Greater Minnesota are the Mobility Managers within their service area. Implementation of the mobility manager concept throughout the state will be transitioned in over a ten year planning horizon.

A Mobility Manager is a person or organization with in depth knowledge of all the passenger transportation options within the designated service area. The public transportation system will not actually provide all requested rides. The mobility manager arranges transportation from a menu of services available in the service area, capturing the best fit between service need and service provider. The major functions of the mobility manager are described in detail later on in the Action Plan.

In areas where a full complement of providers does not exist, the mobility manager continues to work with local organizations to fill the service gap to overcome real or perceived obstacles to the coordination effort.

The success of this initiative will depend in large part on efforts at the state, regional and local levels. State level efforts should focus on establishing policy, program administration, and supporting coordination through the regulatory framework. The regional efforts should address regional mobility issues, coordination planning at the local and regional levels, and liaison with state policy makers. Actual mobility

management, service provision and operational components of the coordination effort take place at the local level.

Interagency Committee on Transportation Coordination (ICTC)

To successfully establish a comprehensive approach to mobility within the state, the concept must be embraced at the state policy level, included in state agency program funding and administration, and championed by high level policy and decision-makers. To that end, a state-level Interagency Committee on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) was formed by Minnesota Governor Pawlenty to promote innovation and coordination in community transportation. The committee is made up of high-level representatives from various state departments that recognize transportation as an essential component of their service delivery system and whose direct or indirect spending comprises a large portion of the transportation funding within the state. The ICTC is directed to identify strategies and solutions for coordinating human service and public transportation service to meet the mobility needs of residents in Minnesota. Among the responsibilities of the committee are:

- Develop an administration-endorsed strategic initiative with corresponding goal and objective statements to establish coordination as a priority. The committee subsequently guides program development, funding and administration at the state level.
- Focus attention on transportation coordination issues at the state, regional and local levels.
- Address and remove or mitigate state-level policy and program related obstacles.
- Formalize policy and promote consistency through development of departmental/agency transportation coordination plan initiatives, cooperative agreements, and directives. Hold departments accountable for measured progress toward goal achievement.
- Introduce new legislation and/or legislative changes to foster coordination efforts and to remove legislated obstacles to coordination.
- Establish basic operational parameters for service quality and safety including standards for driver requirements and training, vehicle inspections, insurance coverage, maintenance, and regulatory compliance.
- Identify transportation-related programs and services of each agency and identify opportunities for inter-agency cooperative agreements for service delivery.
- Encourage the development of coordination incentives including funding, regulatory relief, and program fund flexibility.
- Address and endorse the Fully Allocated Cost concept.
- Assess feasibility of consolidating or funneling funding streams to promote coordination.
- Promote creation of inter-departmental demonstration projects and develop criteria for project selection.

- Establish one set of standardized performance measures (standards), record keeping and reporting requirements for use with funding sources.
- Monitor and assess the effectiveness of coordination initiatives. Conduct cross agency analysis of the effectiveness, efficiency, and overall quality of the coordinated services.
- Implement a communications plan to promote coordination at the local level.
- Foster research, education, training, and outreach efforts to enhance coordination expertise, knowledge, and innovation.

The ICTC will promote regional mobility and a systematic approach to service provision by supporting regional transportation coordination planning efforts. The ICTC will also support flexibility and self determination at the local level by empowering local decision makers to build on existing infrastructure within this established framework parameter. A lead agency at the state level will be required to further inter-agency coordination program initiatives. Recognizing that MnDOT already has a major transportation infrastructure in place, the ICTC should recognize MnDOT as the lead state agency for transportation coordination with the state.

Regional Transportation Coordination Planning Councils

To foster the coordination of human service and public transit services at the local level and ensure inter-county trips and regional mobility issues are addressed, Regional Transportation Coordination Planning Councils will be established along MnDOT district boundaries. These planning councils will promote the development and delivery of coordinated transportation services by requiring participation by human service transportation programs and public transit systems in a community transportation planning process (Executive Order #13330: Recommendation #1).

The planning councils will include representation from each public transit system, human service agency, tribes, private sector, school districts, senior facilities, and planning agencies in the area. The Councils will assist with the formation and implementation of the coordination effort, provide planning assistance, help garner local financial support and monitor the service quality and efficiency of the coordinated systems. The Councils will also review and provide input into the selection of candidates for special coordination demonstration projects that may be provided as part of this initiative.

The planning councils will be established along MnDOT district boundaries even though they are not the same as the boundaries for Regional Development Commissions (RDC's) or human service agency regions. It is important to establish the transportation coordination planning effort in a geographic environment that reflects current travel patterns and regional interconnectivity. Since the MnDOT district boundaries are already employed when making transportation infrastructure investments within the state, it is reasonable to establish common geographic boundaries for the coordination effort and to encourage other agencies responsible for human service transportation to likewise adopt common region definitions.

Defining the planning councils in this manner also provides the opportunity for MnDOT district representatives to play a major role in facilitating the coordination efforts within their district. MnDOT personnel will serve as the staff of the planning councils and will be available to provide technical assistance as needed. MnDOT staff will also play a major role as the champions of coordination at the local level. Staff will maintain focus on the long-term benefits of the coordination effort.

The councils will be responsible for creating area-wide Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plans. During the planning process council members will inventory and document all the transportation services provided within the region, determine the nature and magnitude of unmet demand, and establish a plan for enhancing coordination at the local level. The plan will define the mobility manager concept and how it will be incorporated into each of the local public transit systems within the area. The role of the transit system staff, service providers, service purchases, local stakeholders and MnDOT district representatives will be addressed. The plan will also provide operating and capital budgets, timeline and implementation plan. The locally developed plan will be developed consistent with the state framework put forth in this action plan and will be consistent with the direction from the ICTC. This Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan will meet the requirements set forth in the FTA Section 5311, Section 5310, new Freedom Initiative, and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grants.

The specific design, operational and logistics aspects of the mobility manager approach to coordination will be developed based on the input and direction of the local public transit system, stakeholders and decision makers for their respective county (ies). Active participation at the county level will be necessary to ensure the success of the planning efforts and to make sure the approach makes sense in their area.

The Regional Transportation Coordination Plan will be developed by the whole Council representation. Regional issues discussed will focus on providing seamless transportation throughout the region including reciprocity of fares, standardization of safety and insurance standards, and uniformity of policies and procedures. The Council can also address the issues associated with transit agencies operating outside of their respective service areas for the purpose of providing coordinated transportation service on a regional basis.

Establishment of Local Mobility Managers

Seventy-three of the eighty counties in Greater Minnesota have some form of public transit system in place. (The seven metro counties all have public transportation.) Most of the systems operate within a single county or single municipality, while a few serve multiple counties. The type of services provided and the service parameters of the systems were determined at the local level. Many of the systems operate deviated route services, while others provide demand responsive services. The six Greater Minnesota Section 5307 systems operate fixed route and ADA complementary paratransit. (These

systems are Duluth, East Grand Forks, Moorhead, St. Cloud, Rochester and LaCrescent.) For the most part, all are confined to the boundaries of their defined service areas. In some cases, the transit agencies provide non-traditional transit services, such as carpools, van pools and commuter bus, to meet mobility needs that cannot be met by the traditional service. In some cases, trip needs outside the purview of the transit agency are provided by volunteers. On a limited basis, some transit agencies have developed relationships with private non-profit agencies and private for-profit agencies to address the mobility needs of local residents.

In addition to this comprehensive public transit infrastructure, Minnesota also has human service transportation programs that operate throughout the state. Some of these programs are administered on a single county level while others serve multi-county regions. Even though the state is responsible for the regulatory and financial control, most of the human service programs are administered through the counties under the direction of county commissioners. Human service agencies provide services to their specific client base. Many agencies have identified lack of transportation as a major impediment for clients attempting to obtain services. As a consequence, agencies have addressed the passenger transportation issue in a myriad of ways. Some have chosen to purchase vehicles and hire staff to directly provide service; others contract with other agencies or the private for-profit sector for the service, others depend on public transportation, some use caseworkers or other program staff to provide trips, and yet others seek the assistance of family and friends.

Between the public transit and human service transportation services there is a significant investment in vehicles, facilities, staff, and transportation expertise at the local level. In addition, the public transit agencies and human services agencies have strong support of their local county officials and stakeholders. Local support is necessary for the success of the coordination effort. Consequently, the transportation coordination effort will be established at the local level using the infrastructure that is already in place.

As discussed previously, the framework that is evolving as the "Minnesota Model" builds on the concept of a comprehensive, well-orchestrated "family of services" that meets the mobility needs of the community by taking advantage of the strengths of various service providers that already exist. Promoting formation or expansion of services to fill in the gaps, and establishing a single contact where all transportation needs can be met is the role of the mobility manager in each public transit system service area.

The decision to assign public transit systems as mobility managers results from the extensive infrastructure already in place, transit agency mission, relationship with MnDOT, state and federal funding base, and in most cases, recognition in their respective service areas as a source of transportation expertise.

The major functions of the mobility manager are described below.

Service Brokerage. The mobility manager will be a service broker. A single telephone number will be established for the mobility manager. All individuals or

agencies with unmet trip requests will contact the mobility manager with their travel needs. The MM will review the menu of available service providers to determine the best, most economical match and then assign the trip to the appropriate service provider.

The mobility manager will build a family of services from the existing network of human service, public transit, private non-profit and private for-profit providers to ensure the capacity, service characteristics, and specialty services are available to meet the needs of all transit dependent residents in the service area including those with special needs that cannot be met by traditional public transit services. Even though service efficiency will be a primary objective of the brokerage service, the special needs of individuals will also be taken into consideration to ensure that the most appropriate, least cost vendor provides the service.

As the mobility manager, the transit system may choose to provide the brokerage service directly or may subcontract operations to other public, private or human service entities. Likewise, the mobility manager of one county may join with mobility managers of other counties to develop a multi-county or regional service brokerage. The framework provides the local communities with substantial flexibility to design and implement the mobility manager function in the way that best meets the needs of their community.

Operations. The broker is responsible for call taking through the use of a single telephone number. The manner in which the scheduling and dispatch functions are performed may vary between mobility manager depending on the number and type of trips to be delivered and the technical capabilities and resources available to the broker. Some brokerages use sophisticated automated software while others use fax, email or the telephone to communicate trip assignments. For many small operations, automated systems are not necessary. The lack of expensive computer systems should not impede implementation of the brokerage concept. For larger, complicated brokerages, an automated system will be essential.

Regardless of the technology used, the broker will access provider schedules of standing order trips. As trip requests are placed, the broker will identify the qualified carrier(s), review their schedules to determine the best fit, and contact the provider to confirm that they can provide the trip. Once confirmed, it will be up to the service provider to dispatch the trip. Successful brokerages maximize vehicle usage, increase efficiency and improve the quality of the trips provided.

If the local transit system does not have the desire or capability to perform these functions, they can be delegated to another participant in the coordination effort or be contracted out to the private sector.

Administration. The mobility manager will be the single contact for transportation information and referral. In addition to the service delivery

component, the mobility manager will also be responsible for administrative functions of the coordination effort. The mobility manager will be responsible for executing contracts between the mobility agency and services providers and maintaining a comprehensive database of transportation services available within the service area, the service characteristics, eligibility and how to access services. The database will include not only those service providers who participate in the coordinated system, but also those who do not.

Each agency participating in the coordination effort will be responsible for determining its own client/trip eligibility. When trips are provided through the brokerage, the broker will confirm that the trip is eligible to ensure that the appropriate agency is charged for the trip. The mobility manager will be responsible for invoicing service purchasers for services delivered and processing payments to the service providers as appropriate. By serving as the financial agent, the mobility manager can more readily access grant funding, resolve disputes, and recoup the brokerage surcharge if one is established.

Safety Oversight and Monitoring. To ensure service quality and consistency between service providers, the mobility manager will establish standards for minimum insurance coverage, driver requirements and training, vehicle inspection, maintenance, risk management, and regulatory compliance issues such as drug and alcohol testing. All service providers that agree to participate in the coordinated system must adhere to standards and provide necessary documentation. To promote consistency, the standards could be established equivalent to requirements set forth for Special Transportation Services (STS). The mobility manager will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the requirements and requiring providers to take corrective action when necessary.

Public Transit Umbrella. An advantage of having the public transit system serve as the mobility manager is the benefit associated with inclusion of the rest of the provider network under the umbrella of the public transit system. For insurance purposes, this association and redefinition of some providers as public transportation may result in more favorable insurance premiums and potential inclusion in the Minnesota Counties Insurance Trust. The public transit system may also be able to include service providers under its umbrella policy and provide excess coverage that may have been previously unattainable by some carriers. The insurance issues are complex and require further assessment before actual coverage and cost impacts can be determined.

The larger size and resulting economies of scale will also result in access to state level agency technical assistance resources, for all brokerage participants.

Service Operators

The more operators that participate and the more capacity will be available, the more flexibility the mobility manager will have in matching trip requests with the most

appropriate operators. However, to participate in the network, the operators will be required to meet various safety, performance and quality standards.

Operators will have to provide proof of insurance coverage with all the appropriate indemnifications and have a risk management program in place. Drivers will have to meet minimum requirements and have the requisite training. Operators must meet various maintenance and vehicle inspection criteria and be in compliance with all relevant regulations. In addition, operators must define their service area and capacity availability in terms of days and hours of service. Operators must also define their level of responsiveness in terms of advanced reservations, dispatch capabilities, and technological capabilities. Operators and mobility managers will need to work out trip request, assignment, and confirmation logistics.

Each operator will be encouraged to determine their pricing schedule based on their fully allocated cost. Providers will be required to follow ICTC defined record keeping and reporting procedures.

Funding the Mobility Manager

The mobility manager functions are outside of the current responsibilities of the transit management staff. To be successful, a position dedicated to transportation coordination must be created at each transit system to develop, implement, direct and expand the program. In some cases the mobility manager may be a full-time or part-time staff member. In other cases, the functions may be an expansion of responsibilities of a current staff member. In any case, time must be dedicated to the mobility manager function. This role and/or the role of the broker may also be contracted out to another entity.

In addition to the staffing costs, mobility management will incur administrative and operational costs (i.e., accounting, marketing, printing, telephone, travel, professional services, etc.). Some services may be provided in-kind, while others will be direct costs. Mobility management will have capital costs associated with technology such as computer hardware and software. Vehicles for fleet expansion or replacement that cannot be funded through already existing programs may add cost to mobility management.

The actual cost of service delivery will be passed through from purchasing entities to service providers on a fee for service basis. The fee will be based on the fully allocated cost to provide the service. The cost of the mobility manager may be paid through agency/program funds, or through the addition of a surcharge to all the trips provided through the mobility manager.

Funding the mobility manager may involve utilization of existing funds, capturing new funding streams, and modifying ways that existing funds are provided. A summary of existing sources is shown below:

These funds can be used to promote coordination by including criteria that reward participation in the mobility manager service delivery network and make it difficult for those who do not participate to score well and compete for funding.

Minnesota is one of the states selected by FTA to demonstrate the use of Section 5310 funds for operating costs associated with improving public transportation to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled.

Even though FTA has yet to publish guidance on the use of these funds, one of the primary goals of mobility managers will be to improve the quality and quantity of transportation services available to the elderly and persons with disabilities through a coordinated family of services. Subsidization of mobility management may be in line with the goals of the demonstration. Alternatively, Section 5310 funds might be used to expand the days, hours, and service area of the public transit service to better meet the needs of the target population. Since no additional funding is expected, the cost of the demonstration will be at the expense of funds used for capital replacement.

Human Service Agencies. Human service agencies supporting the mobility manager program may also have access to funding for expanding the coordination effort. Specifically, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Aging has funded transit projects that demonstrate how increased coordination can assist the elderly population to remain in their homes and avoid premature institutionalized care. Access to service provided by the Mobility Manager that responds to the specific needs of the all seniors including the frail elderly who may have special needs is in line with the goals of the demonstration and may be a good candidate for discretionary funds from DHS.

Philanthropic Organizations. Organizations such as the United Way, American Red Cross, and local or regional philanthropic organizations may provide funding to promote the formation and expansion of the mobility management concept. For example, United Way research in local communities has identified access to transportation as a major problem in local communities. The United Way has a history of providing seed money to assist in the formation of comprehensive coordinated transportation programs made up of human service transportation and public transit agencies. Other community based organizations such as hospitals and charitable organizations focused on specific populations (i.e., seniors, disabled, low income) who will be served by the mobility manager may also wish to help support the initial system formation.

Incorporation of Non Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT)

The Department of Human Services is the single state agency in the State of Minnesota that administers the Medicaid program under Title XIX of the Social Security Act. The Act requires states to assure necessary transportation to recipients to and from covered services. The DHS is responsible for providing non-emergency medical transportation to

eligible Medical Assistance (MA)/General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) and MinnesotaCare (state funded insurance for low income Minnesotans) recipients to ensure reasonable access to and from covered medical services. The transportation should be provided using the least expensive mode of transportation available that is appropriate to the medical needs of the recipient. DHS does not provide transportation services directly, but engages a brokerage to organize transportation on behalf of those seeking medical services.

Minnesota non-emergency transportation (MNET) services include both Access Transportation Services (ATS) and Special Transportation Services (STS). ATS includes transportation provided by a volunteer driver, common carrier, parking fees, contract for services or direct mileage reimbursement to the recipient or the recipient's driver. STS includes the transport of a recipient who because of a physical or mental impairment is unable to use a common carrier, but does not require ambulance service. Some eligible clients are enrolled in a Prepaid Medical Assistance Program (PMAP). Clients who are excluded from PMAP are served through the fee-for-service program. MNET services provided as part of a PMAP are included in the Managed Care Organization (MCO) capitation rate. PMAP provides common carrier transportation and special transportation to its enrollees for the purpose of obtaining health care services.

In the Greater Minnesota area, the MNET service is the responsibility of the individual counties and thus, has varying methods of service delivery, program administration, and oversight. The DHHS is currently considering potential changes to correct deficiencies and institute policies and procedures that will address these issues. One of the actions under consideration is the possibility of moving the administration of the PMAP elderly waiver program from the counties to the Managed Care Organization (MCOs) within the area. If this occurs, the DHHS could encourage the MCOs to contract with their respective mobility managers to provide services within their designated coverage area.

In this case the mobility manager could use its resources to ensure that MNET trips meet the mandates of the program including assignment of the trips to the least cost, appropriate service provider. Additionally, the mobility manager would serve as the single point of contact and would ensure that all service providers used their fully allocated cost to ensure fair and open competition for trips based on quality of service, customer satisfaction, and cost.

The mobility managers will provide a needed service for the MCOs. The influ of trips will create economics of scale and travel demand that will benefit service providers, and the administrative fees will support the cost of the mobility manager.

Grants Management

One of the strengths of the MnDOT approach to public transit is the decentralization of oversight responsibilities to district representatives located within each District.

Decentralization provides closer contact with subrecipients and a greater level of involvement than might be expected by their counterparts in other states. With the focus of local transportation coordination planning at the district level, the role of the district representatives will be expanded to aid in the planning effort and to assist in the formation and implementation of the mobility management concept at each of the transit systems within the district. District representatives will provide guidance, support, and technical assistance specific to each transit system. This level of involvement by the district representatives will require a major education effort and ongoing communication to ensure consistent interpretations, monitoring, and enforcement of the mobility manager program.

The success of the mobility management program will depend in part on the manner in which it is recognized by public transit and human service agency transportation funding programs. The full benefit of the mobility management program can only be achieved if the major programs administered by MnDOT (Section 5310 and Section 5311) and DHHS adopt the mobility manager concept and incorporate the coordination philosophy within the program goals, application process, funding incentives, performance measures, and application weighting criteria.

Given the recent increases and expansion of the funding programs described earlier in this chapter, MnDOT has significant latitude in the way a combined funding stream can be created to further the coordination effort. The flexibility provides MnDOT with an unprecedented opportunity to combine funding streams to support the mobility manager program.

The application processes for both programs should be modified to reflect the emphasis on coordination and should use weighting criteria that distinguishes between applications that document significant coordination efforts and agencies making major strides toward goal achievement from those that have made little effort and are comfortable with the status quo. The distribution of discretionary program funds (5310, JARC, New Freedom Initiative) should be based on an agency's progress including substantial incentives for those who successfully embrace coordination. Agencies that do not will subsequently find it difficult to successfully compete for discretionary funding.

MnDOT Technical Assistance

The Rural Transit Assistance Program was created by the Federal Transit Administration in 1986 to promote the safe and effective delivery of public transportation in non-urbanized areas. The program accomplishes this by providing information, technical assistance, training and resource materials. Specifically in Minnesota, the RTAP program is used to facilitate training for transit drivers including Passenger Assistance, Defensive Driving and Abuse Prevention. Additional training is provided in the areas of substance abuse and compliance, procurement, scheduling and dispatching, vehicle maintenance and inspection, and other topics as the need arises. RTAP supports the statewide bus rodeo and conference workshops. RTAP also maintains a library of resource materials and funds the production of the "Transit Bulletin" newsletter.

Any transit agency or organization located in a non-urbanized area of the state and funded under Section 5311 or Section 5310 is eligible to participate in RTAP sponsored activity. The RTAP program can easily be expanded to serve as a resource to promote and support the Mobility Managers and all participating entities. Assistance can be provided in the following manner:

- One page of the newsletter can be devoted to transportation coordination and related issues
- Participating entities could be encouraged to attend existing trainings
- An annual meeting or periodic forums on coordination can be sponsored to promote information exchange and networking
- RTAP can help author and/or distribute additional updates and expansions to the MnDOT Transportation Coordination Toolkit.

Subrecipient Oversight

FTA requires that State grantees develop a regular program of compliance monitoring. Minnesota uses a two tiered system of grantee oversight. The first level are the Mn/DOT district representatives who make at least four visits per year to each Section 5311 subrecipient and at least one visit per year to each Section 5310 grantee. The district representatives' regional perspective is helpful in understanding where there are commonalities of need as well as commonalities of available resources.

The second level of subrecipient oversight occurs periodically when program administrators from the Office of Transit visit ten to twelve transit systems per year. The visits involve day long interviews in which operations, safety and security, and service design are thoroughly evaluated. The transit system's relationships with other organizations are reviewed to determine if full cost allocation principles were used in developing service contracts. It is at these evaluations that coordination with other transportation operators is covered. Interviewers make recommendations for modification of service design, if needed, and counsel the transit system on ways to use coordinated services to operate more efficiently.